LANDFIRE

LESSONS LEARNED: Issue 2

Local Experts Develop Reference Models for Wyoming and the Black Hills

Twenty ecologists and fire managers from the USFS, BLM, NPS, and academic institutions met in Laramie, Wyoming September 8-10, 2004 to contribute their expertise to the LANDFIRE project (see box at right). Participants from across Wyoming and the Black Hills region devoted three days to documenting their knowledge about ecosystem structure, succession, and fire and other disturbance dynamics into quantitative ecological models of reference (pre-EuroAmerican settlement) conditions.

LANDFIRE is a wildland fire, ecosystem, and fuel assessment-mapping project designed to generate consistent, comprehensive, landscape-scale maps of vegetation, fire, and fuel characteristics for the United States. It responds to agency and partner needs for data to support fire management planning, prioritization of fuel treatments, collaboration, community and firefighter protection and effective resource allocation. It is a collaborative $40 million 5-year partnership between the USDA Forest Service, Department of the Interior and The Nature Conservancy. For more information, please visit www.landfire.gov.

Filling in a Rangeland Gap

The workshop, facilitated by The Nature Conservancy and USFS Missoula Fire Sciences Lab, was designed to augment existing reference condition models for the Northern and Central Rockies region. Experts were briefed on the history and objectives of the LANDFIRE project, reviewed models developed at the previous Northern and Central Rockies workshop in Missoula, MT in June 2004 (see LANDFIRE Lessons Learned Issue 1), and developed new models specific to Wyoming and the Black Hills region. They were able to provide more detailed information on rangeland vegetation types than was garnered at the Missoula workshop and helped to map new potential natural vegetation groups across the region.

After the models undergo external peer review, the LANDFIRE project will use the models to complete a Rapid Assessment of Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) across the US. FRCC is a measurement of the departure of current vegetation and fire regime conditions from the historic range of variability. This national FRCC map will be used for regional to national strategic planning, broad ecological assessments, and resource allocation.

Next Steps: Rapid Assessment Workshops in the Western US

Models developed in Laramie will be reviewed and incorporated, when applicable, into other regions via expert workshops for the rest of the Western US. Workshops will be held this fall in Albuquerque, NM for the southwest region, Salt Lake City, UT for the Great Basin region, McClellan, CA for California, and Portland, OR for the Pacific Northwest region. Workshops for the eastern US will be held in the winter and spring of 2005. (For schedules and contact information, please click on "Workshops" at www.landfire.gov.) Over the next 5 years, models developed for these regions and all others across the US will be refined, peer-reviewed by a broader group of experts, and used for finer resolution LANDFIRE mapping.

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